



806 of 821 DOCUMENTS

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HEADLINE: You name it, the 45th District has it
CAMPAIGN 1994 -- HOUSE OF DELEGATES

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BODY:

In the clannish, often quarrelsome political world of East Baltimore, a lot of the candidates this year have an odd thing in common. They share the same last name.

There's Robert Stokes, a 36-year-old community activist who headed a mayor's station until he decided to run for the state House of Delegates.

There's Clyde A. Stokes, a 52-year-old political unknown who remains something of a mystery since filing for state Senate in the name's-the-same tradition of city politics.

And there's Carl Stokes, a 44-year-old city councilman who entered the Senate race only after the two political organizations that dominate East Baltimore's 45th District failed to agree on fielding a unified ticket. The three candidates who share the Stokes name are unrelated. But the peculiarity that one-fourth of the 12 candidates seeking state office in the district have the same surname is only part of the intrigue.

There also are two feuding political clubs and two vying tickets -- one headed by Councilman Stokes and another by former City Councilman Nathaniel J. McFadden. Mr. Stokes unseated Mr. McFadden in 1987 in a similar name's-the-same campaign when a Harold McFadden ran.

State Sen. Nathan C. Irby, whose self-described "sabbatical" set up the tough race, is supporting Mr. McFadden for the state Senate. Mr. McFadden challenged him two terms ago. And so are some of Maryland's most powerful political figures, including Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke and Gov. William Donald Schaefer.

Mr. Irby now says he is interested in running for the council presidency, a position Mr. Stokes had planned to seek. To an outsider, and even to some of the district's 40,000 registered voters, the race appears confusing. But Councilman Anthony J. Ambridge, a 2nd District Democrat, calls that ordinary.

"Half the time, you don't know the players unless you have a card," Mr. Ambridge said. "It's not unusual for there to be conflicting tickets from election to election. There's been a lot of people with similar names holding office, but the people in East Baltimore know the players."

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The first twist in the campaign came not long after Mr. Irby announced that he would not seek a fourth term. Mr. Irby, who had split with the Eastside Democratic Organization, reunited with the club to back its choice of a successor for the state Senate -- Mr. McFadden.

Often rivals, the Eastside club and the newer East End Forum tried to join forces. But 10 days before the filing deadline, their fragile truce collapsed in a disagreement over the ticket's three candidates for the House of Delegates.

Both clubs had lost little time in selecting Hattie N. Harrison, a fixture in the House of Delegates since 1973, and newcomer Talmadge Branch. Councilman Stokes insisted that the third position go to his friend Robert Stokes. But Mr. McFadden's Eastside organization opted for Clarence Davis, a state delegate seeking his fourth term.

An annoyed Councilman Stokes formed a rival ticket with Robert Stokes and two newcomers -- Kelley Ray, an environmental and housing activist from Belair Edison, and Emmanuel S. Holmes, a tenant organizer from Gardenville.

One of the two-term councilman's biggest obstacles is the third Stokes, even though he remains largely an obscure figure.

Less than two weeks remain until the Sept. 13 primary, yet there have been no visible signs of the Clyde Stokes campaign. None of the election posters in front of the neatly kept homes and shops in his own Four-by-Four neighborhood bears his name. Nor do any of the leaflets handed out at street corners, churches and community centers. He has failed to show up for political forums and hasn't responded to voter questionnaires.

The other two candidates agree that they haven't seen much of Clyde Stokes. Nevertheless, Councilman Stokes recognizes the potential threat of confusion over the two names and has cried foul. He charges that "Clyde is not a legitimate candidate" and is in the race strictly to derail his campaign.

Mr. McFadden, 47, a counselor for a college scholarship program at Lake Clifton-Eastern High School, shrugs at the predicament.

"Maybe the same person is involved," he said with a smile. But he adds that he has seen no sign of Clyde Stokes. "Quite frankly, we're not looking for him," he said.

After a reporter left messages with East Baltimore community leaders and at an Eager Street bar, Clyde Stokes called this week to defend his candidacy.

A retired Bethlehem Steel worker who was a baseball and basketball standout at Dunbar High School, Mr. Stokes said he wants to make a difference in the deteriorating sections of East Baltimore.

"I feel as though the community needs a lot of things that haven't been done. When I was coming up, we had a lot of things to do, playing ball and all, and the kids don't have anything to do today," he said.

Mr. Stokes has been arrested more than once, mostly on minor charges, which have either been dismissed or resulted in probation. He also was charged in the summer of 1990 in a shooting on East Biddle Street. A Baltimore Circuit Court jury acquitted him of charges of attempted murder, conspiracy, handgun offenses and being an accessory in the shooting. His campaign, a door-to-door effort he is financing with limited personal funds, has failed to attract much notice.

In the blocks of the McFadden ticket's power base, the neighborhood of former Mayor Clarence H. Du Burns and his longtime allies, the Stokes name draws puzzled looks. Mr. McFadden, fondly known here as "Mack," puts up one of his signs after another and leans into open windows to chat with his neighbors.

Mr. Irby is by his side in a red baseball cap that says, "Most Valuable Dad." "I think Mack has got that vision of East Baltimore that we can rise like a phoenix from the ashes, and we've got to instill that in the people. And he's got the

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youthfulness to achieve that," Mr. Irby said.

Mr. Schmoke has been campaigning with the McFadden team, which also has the support of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance and both 2nd District council members, Mr. Ambridge and Paula Johnson Branch.

But what matters most to a neighbor like Margie Brinkley is that she knows and trusts the incumbents. "We've gotten some serious, serious help from Hattie and the rest of them."

Mr. McFadden lives on the same block as Ms. Harrison and only a few streets away from Talmadge Branch and Delegate Davis. Members of Councilman Stokes' "New Leadership Team" argue that their opponents are just too close to offer much for the rest of the district.

"They all live within six blocks of each other and want to keep control within this tight little group," Councilman Stokes said.

With Ms. Ray, Mr. Holmes and Robert Stokes, the councilman has been campaigning energetically from Belair-Edison at the northern end of the district to Broadway East, Oliver and Johnston Square. His ticket has the support of environmental activists and other council members, including 1st District Democrats Perry Sfikas and John Cain.

Nevertheless, Mr. McFadden questions his opponent's commitment. Earlier this year, Councilman Stokes had made plans to run for the council presidency. The seat is considered up for grabs because Council President Mary Pat Clarke plans to challenge Mr. Schmoke next year.

"He's telling people to vote for him for a year. That's ludicrous," Mr. McFadden said.

Councilman Stokes said he is committed to the state Senate race and does not plan to campaign for council presidency if he wins.

On the streets of Darley Park, he jots down complaints and points out most residents don't even even recognize the names of the incumbents.

Mr. Holmes chimes in, "You have to be careful about people who say they bring experience in leadership at a time when we're experiencing a high crime rate, a collapse in middle-class homeownership, trash problems. . . . If you're practicing losing trends, you're practicing the wrong trends."

The young candidates strike a chord with many of the people who are at first reluctant to hear another pitch from politicians. But their challenge is best summed up in the words of an elderly woman in Darley Park, who leaned over the railing with a quizzical look as Robert Stokes bounded up the stairs.

"Stokes?" she asked. She pointed down the street as Councilman Stokes knocked on another door and said, "I thought he was a Stokes."

GRAPHIC: PHOTO 1, KARL M. FERRON/SUN STAFF PHOTO, As state Senate candidate Nathaniel J. McFadden (left) thanks Dickey Kelly for his support, another Berea neighborhood resident calls to Mr. McFadden to volunteer to work on his campaign.; PHOTO 2, ANDRE LAMBERTSON/SUN STAFF PHOTO, Councilman Carl Stokes (second from right) is flanked by ticket mates Emmanuel S. Holmes (left) and Robert Stokes as they campaign at Captain James Seafood.; MAP, ROBERT CRONAN/SUN STAFF GRAPHIC, 45TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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